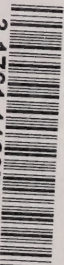


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# FleetSmart PROFILES

## BELL CITY TRANSPORT

*Achieving Cost Savings through  
Employee Productivity*

Bell City Transport reduced its fleet fuel consumption by 25 per cent between 1992 and 1994, a period of significant growth in business volume. Among the key reasons was the company's commitment to provide drivers with the training, equipment and motivation they needed to practice energy-efficient driving techniques.



### About the company

Bell City Transport is a subsidiary of Bell City Brands, an agricultural produce company established in 1956 to distribute vegetables grown in the Brantford, Ontario, area to local retailers. Initially, the parent company only hauled produce during Ontario's growing season and laid off its drivers in the winter. As business increased, however, Bell City Brands decided to transport produce from Florida during the winter, thereby becoming a year-round operation that could provide steady employment for its drivers.

During the winter months, Bell City Transport hauls automobile parts, cardboard cartons, furniture and other merchandise to Florida and returns with

service

vegetables and other produce, which is distributed to grocery stores in Ontario. In the summer, the fleet works mostly within Ontario.

Bell City Transport has experienced significant growth over the past five years and currently operates 15 tractors and 21 trailers. Most of the trailers are 48-foot refrigerated vans, although the company also operates six dry-freight trailers that run exclusively within an 800-kilometre radius of Brantford. Vehicle maintenance is currently contracted to a service garage located beside the company's terminal in Brantford.

## Cost control strategy

The company decided some time ago that the best way to control its operating costs would be through proper equipment specification and driver attention to safety, idling and speeding.

"For our type of operation, excessive fuel consumption is one of the things we have to watch very carefully, and it is usually due to a mechanical problem or speeding," notes Bell City President, Ron Eadie. "It's that simple. Our major cost-control objectives were to stop the trucks from idling excessively and to slow the trucks down."

## Safety program

To promote safe driving practices, Bell City enlisted the help of the Transportation Safety Association to design a safe driving and first-aid training program for new drivers. The company also regularly "screens" a training video on safe driving techniques called *DriveSave* (distributed by the Ontario government's Trucksave Program). All safety violations are reviewed with drivers, and a clean traffic violation and safety record is one of the merit factors in Bell City Transport's weekly driver bonus program.

rather than cube-out (in other words, legal weight limits are reached before the trailers are full). For this reason, the company sees no advantage in switching to 53-foot trailers.

All trucks are now equipped with Detroit Diesel electronic engines that offer superior fuel economy and low exhaust emissions. Also, as a means of reducing fuel consumption, the company has purchased trailers constructed of lightweight aluminum parts and fitted with wind deflectors to improve aerodynamics.

## Equipment specification

In terms of vehicle spec'ing, the company has made a conscious decision to use one type of truck. The nature of the cargo carried by the company — bulky agricultural commodities — causes trucks to weight-out

**Bell City Transport considered innovations such as satellite tracking and the use of on-board computers to enable two-way communication. However, given the relatively small fleet, its emphasis on point-to-point direct-hauling, and the fact that most of its loads are not highly time-sensitive, the company decided satellite technology was not necessary at this time.**

## **Controlling idling and speeding**

Bell City Transport was aware that most engine idling was the result of drivers trying to keep the cabs warm overnight while they slept. To address this problem, the company installed auxiliary heaters in all of its trucks, at a cost of approximately \$2,500 per unit. Although the company knew that this solution might not be appropriate in colder climates, it was convinced that the heaters would work well in the milder temperatures encountered by drivers on their way to and from Florida.

"It worked like a charm," reports Ron Eadie. "The drivers love it because it's quiet for sleeping".

In most of the company trucks, electronic engines are programmed to shut off after two minutes of idling. Mr. Eadie estimates the auxiliary heaters save about four litres of fuel for every hour of use.

Bell City has also programmed its computerized engines to provide speeds of up to 105 kilometres per hour on the pedal and 100 kilometres per hour when running on cruise control. At these settings, the trucks are expected to achieve 37 to 40 litres per 100 kilometres (7.0 to 7.6 miles per gallon). This is in contrast to an average of 48 litres per 100 kilometres (5.9 miles per gallon), obtained at an average speed of 112 kilometres per hour.

To encourage drivers to save fuel, the company incorporated fuel efficiency into a driver incentive program, established in 1992. Drivers earn points for fuel economy, for avoiding accidents and traffic violations, and for the cleanliness of their trucks. In the case of fuel economy, points are awarded for achieving the corporate target of 40 litres per 100 kilometres, with additional points earned for bettering this target. Points

are awarded every week based on the fuel sheets and logs filled out by drivers. The success of this driver incentive program was evident in the first year alone, when the company realized fuel savings of \$30,000, half of which was subsequently paid out in driver bonuses.

## Other employee incentives

Bell City Transport considers the company's drivers to be its sales representatives and believes that motivated, courteous drivers reflect positively on the company's business. "We know that when we give something to our drivers we are not taking it away from the company, but in fact giving it to ourselves," says Mr. Eadie.

Bell City Transport also hosts an annual dinner that includes an employee recognition program. The company's top driver wins a one-week trip for two to a sunny southern destination, such as the Bahamas or Mexico.

The end result of these efforts is a content, motivated crew of drivers who share the company's commitment to safety and fuel efficiency. The facts speak for themselves: in 1994, Bell City Transport used 260 million litres of fuel — 25 per cent less than in 1992 — despite strong growth in the company's business volume.

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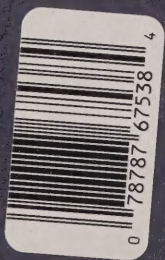
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